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Transmigration policy in East Timor

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In December 1986, the head of the Transmigration Office in East Timor announced that transmigration would be a top priority in 1987/88. Piecing together reports in the Indonesian press, the new emphasis on transmigration appears to mean the following:

1. East Timorese villagers, the majority of whom were uprooted in the devastating military operations of 1978/79 and forced to live in **pemukiman** under army control, will now be returned to their regions of origin, though not to their villages but to specially constructed sites. These sites will become transmigration sites for transmigrants from Java and Bali, with the likely ratio of 1:1 between East Timorese and Indonesians. The programme is called **pemukiman kembali** or re-resettlement.
2. East Timorese who were violently dispossessed of their land as a result of the destructive military operations in the late 1970s have lived for years without any land entitlement in the **pemukiman**. In the new sites, they will be 'given' land according to the criteria of the transmigration programme. The Indonesians hope this will dispense with complaints and create conditions for the dispossessed Timorese to become productive. But what it means is that, even less than with transmigration programmes elsewhere, the 'locals' are given no choice about joining these sites.
3. The 1:1 ratio has become established practice in the small number of transmigration sites already set up in western parts of East Timor. If this continues to be the practice in the new sites, Indonesian security needs of pacifying the Timorese population and swamping them with Indonesians will be met.
4. Placing transmigration firmly within the framework of the army's 'territorial management' doctrine, General Murdani has declared that "transmigration is the only programme in the economic field that must quite categorically be tied in with defence and security considerations" (**Sinar Harapan**, 8.III.85).
5. Because of the particularly drastic population upheaval that has already occurred in East Timor, the authorities have taken the decision that transmigration, which is essential to Indonesia's control of the country, cannot proceed until people confined to the **pemukiman** are first re-settled in places that will become their permanent 'homes'. The present **pemukiman** are far too overcrowded and infertile for this to be a solution. Governor Mario Carrascalao has been quoted as saying that, "once the East Timorese have been placed in decent locations, there will be no more problems and obstacles to transmigration from outside East Timor" (**Kompas**, 24.XII.86). Hopes that the Timorese will see this as an alleviation of their plight are remote.
6. In July 1986, the army launched a new offensive code-named **Operasi Kikis** (Operation Extinction). Placed in the context of Indonesia's re-resettlement programme, the primary purpose of this operation appears to be to 'clear' large areas in the east where Fretilin guerrillas are active and secure the sites against the guerrillas. As yet no statements are available indicating how long this programme will take or how many outsiders will be brought in except for a recent remark by Carrascalao that the population of East Timor could rise to one million by 2000.

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